

The Argument vpon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon: by Erasmus of Roterodame.



This Philemon (after the Grekes wyting) was a Phrygia bozne, whiche nacton of people is vnttraceable & claupe, as the Grekes owne pꝛouerbe maketh often mencion: Stripes make the Phrygian to amende. And yet Paul reckoned this Philemon one of hys speciall frendes, by cause of his godlynes & diligence done to y^e sayntes. And a seruaunt of his one Onesimus had runne away fro him to Rome, and had theuishlye stolen somwhat from him, as seruauntes are for the moste parte vsed to doe. There whan he had hearde Paule, who at that tyme was in bondes, he receiued the doctrine of the gospel, and serued Paule in pꝛison. But lest the maister should be vexed in his mynde for hys seruatintes runnyng away, he sendeth him home agayne, & with a wonderfull diligence and ciuilitie, he reconsieth vnto the Maister his seruaunt that had bene both, a runnegate and a piker, and offereth him selfe to be swettye to make good what soeuer he had piked at his runnyng away. This Epistle he wrote from the pꝛison by the sayd Onesimus whom he also calleth his sonne.

Thus endeth the Argument.

The paraphrase of Erasmus

vpon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon.

The .i. Chapter.

Paule the prysoner of Christe & brother Timothee. Vnto Philemon the beloued, and oure helper, and to the beloued Appia, and to Archippus oure felowe souldier, and to the congregation that is of thy house. Grace be vnto you and peace from God oure father, & from the Lord Iesus Christe.

The text



Paule becoze this tyme an Apostle and seruante of Iesu Christ and nowe his prysoner also: for why shoulde not I be glad to be hys prysoner, for whose ghospelles sake I weare these bondes: not for the punishment of any euill that I haue done, but as a notable badge of a free & valiant preacher: and also my felowe ghospellypreacher, brother Timothee, vnto Philemon in the profession of the commane faith a brother, singularly woorthy to be beloued: and not a brother onely but also my companion in very many affaires & partaker in the office of the gospel: & to his wyfe Appia my moste welbeloued syster as concernyng the kynred of fayth: & to Archippus our felowe souldier and to the rest of the congregacion whiche is at his house: Grace be vnto you and peace from God oure comune father & fro his sonne the lord Iesu Christe.

I thanke my god, making merciō alwayes of the in my prayers, when I heare of thy loue and fayth, whiche thou haste towards the Lord Iesu, and towards all sayntes, so that the fellowshyppe of thy fayth is fruteful in the knowledge of euery good (woorde) whiche is in you towarde Iesus Christe. For we haue great loye and consolacion in thy loue: because that by thee (brother) the sayntes heres are comforted.

The text

In my prayers wherwith I am accustomed to sacrifice daylye vnto God, I rende thanks vnto him alwayes on thy behalfe. For I ascribe it thankefully vnto him, that I heare spoken openly of all men, that is to say, both the purenesse, & thy ryght gospelling charitie, which I bearest towardes the lord Iesus & not towardes hym only, but also towardes al sayntes, I is to wete, his mebres vnto who what so euer is bestowed, hys wyl is to recke it done to hym self. And this I also beseeche him, to augment his mercifulnes vpon thee, & that this thy fayth, whiche is not idle in the, may expresse his power dayly more & more, & to enforce the with plenteousnes to releue mo & mo, so I there be no office of christians an charitie but that thou maye be both acquaynted and tried in it. The thynges that thou hast hitherto done already, occasion vs to conceaue a more sure confidence in thee, that we dare be bolde to recken vpon the in maters of greater weyghte. For whan I doe consider that all that Christians haue are com-mune, I am not a litle ioyous, and euen in these afflictions it was no smal comforte to me, that thou (o my brother) wast so ready to deserue well of al men, by meanes of thy loue, wherwith thou haste refreshed the sayntes heartes that are afflicted with the sorowes of this worlde. For in thys thy doing thou declarest thy selfe to be a ryght brother.

Wherfore, though I myght be bolde in Christ to commaunde thee, that whiche was thy dewtye to do: yet for loues sake I rather beseeche the, though I be as I am, euen olde Paul, and now a prysoner of Iesu Christ. I beseeche the for my sonne Onclimus whom I haue begotten in my bondes (whiche in tyme passed was to the vnpoyntable but nowe profitable both to the and to me) whom I haue sent home agayne. Thou therefore receyue him, that is to say, myne owne bowels, whom I woulde fayne haue retained w

The text

The paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Epistle

me, that in thy Academie myght haue ministered vnto me in the bondes of the gospell. Neuertheles, without thy mynde woulde I do nothing, that the good which thou doest should not be as it were of necessitie, but willingly.

Wherfoze hauyng the experience of these so many matters, whereby thou declarest thy selfe to be a true follower of Christ, I trusted exceedingly, that I myght obteyne of the what I wyl, albeit I commaunded the only, as the father his sonne, and as an Apostle his disciple, namely in a matter of it selfe indifferent and agreeable to the gospelles doctryne, that thou professest: whiche commaundeth, that we by experience selynge the mercye of the Lorde in forgyuyng our debte, shoulde lykewyse forgyue other, yet I had rather to obteyne this at thyne handes by charitie, than by myne authoritie: and I woulde rather desire the, as one brother desyret another, than commaunde the as a master his scholar. And thou shalt not disdayne suche a desyroure. For in what thyng canst thou save me naye that I desyre thee? yea euen I, first Paule (whan I speake of Paule, I meane matters vnto the that are not small) than an olde man. And muche is wonte to be graunted to a man for his age sake. But thys geare is no nouelties to thee. And nowe also a prysoner. And in makyng of desyres euen the miserie of the beseecher hath no small weight. Last of al, I am the prysoner of Christe Iesu. And to suche a prysoner all ought to beare their fauour that professe the doctrine of Christe. To a man that desyret by so many wayes thou couldest not save nay, althoughe he shoulde entreate the for anye man. But nowe I entreate thee for my sonne, whom I loue so muche the more tenderly, that I begate him not vnto Moses, but vnto Christ, not to the world but to the gospell: yea and I begate hym in my bondes nowe whan I shall shortly goe out of this worlde. For parentes are wonte to loue their chyldren more inwardely, whom they begate in their extreme olde age. This is euen Onesimus, that in tymes past whan he had robbed his mayster runne awaye frome hym, stell agreeably to hys owne name, that is to wete, profytable and trustie, nowe is cleane chaunged into an other sort, and shal not only be trusty for thy profyte herafter, but also he was profytable to me wyth hys seruyce in pryson. Therfoze I sende him to the home agayne, for nowe he is become an other man. And yf thou be the man, that I trust thou art: and yf olde Paule the prysoners commendacion standeth of any effecte with the, thou shalt receyue Onesimus, not nowe as a runneagate seruaunt, but as the thynges that I set moost stooze by, and my syngularly welbeloued sonne. It is agaynst my wyl that I sende him home agayne. For I had rather kepe him still with me, if it were but for thys cause, that he should represent thee vnto me in these bondes. For I doubt not, but inasmuche as thou shewest so muche charitie towardes all others for the gospelles sake, thou wouldest in case thou were here, minister also to me in these bondes, wherewith I am tyed for the gospelles sake. But nowe he is founde vnsought for, by whom thou mayest minister vnto me being absent thy selfe. Howbeit I woulde do nothing without thyne aduise, lest yf in vsyng myne autozitie I shoulde do it vpon myne owne head, althoughe thou wouldest haue taken my dede in good parte, yet thy well doings shoulde haue the lesse commendacion, yf it seemed to be toynded with any necessitie. Now I sent him home agayne, so as it maye be in thy choysse eyther to kepe hym still with the, or to sende him to me agayne. Yf thou sende him agayne, thy doings shall haue so muche the moze pryse, in that it is not enforced but freely done

and of thynne owne mynde.

For happily he therfore departed for a season, that thou shouldest. . . . sue him for euer, not now as a seruant: but about a seruant, euen a brother beloved, specially to me: but how much more vnto the, both in f flesh, & also in f lord: If I coulde me therfore a sclow, receaue hym as my selfe. If he haue done the any hurt, or oweth the oughte, I laye to my charge, (I Paul haue writte it w mine owne hand) I wyl receyue it. So I do not say to the, how I thou owest vnto me euen thine owne selfe also. Sue so (brother) let me enioy the in f lord. Adoore my bowels in the lord. Trusting in thyn obedience, I wrot vnto the, knowing I thou wylt also do more than I say. Agreouer, prepare me lodging: for I trust I thow the helpe of your prayres, I shalbe geuen vnto you. The salute the, Epaphras my felowe prysoner in Christ Iesu, Marcus, Aristarcus, Demas, Lucas, my helpers. The grace of our lorde Iesu Christe be wity your spirite. Amen.

The text:

Doe not thinke vpon his runnyng away. He hath recompensed the fault of his fleing with his wel doynge, he hath washed it away by baptisme, he hath done it away w teares. And how woorest I whether it come so to passe by I dispensacion of Gods prouidence, I his fault might turne to good both to vs & to him: The iudgemetes of god be secret. Perchaunce he was for this purpose taken away fro thee for a season, I for a seruant being but for a season (for bonde seruice endurethe no longer than for terme of lyfe) thou mightest receyue him for euer. It is for euer whatsoeuer the gospel byingeth forth, & that I shouldest receyue him againe now not as a bond seruant but as a most dere brother: Cruely vnto me that am an Apostle, he is bothe a brother and most dearely beloved brother, for the commune faithes sake, which maketh vs like in Christ: for the commune enheritaunce sake, wherunto we are called indifferently like: for the commune fathers sake, for the commune redemers sake, in whiche all there is no difference betwene the lorde and the seruant, betwene the maister and the scholar. And yf he for these causes be vnto me most dearely beloved, w whome I haue nothyng commune sayng the kynred of the spirit how much more ought he to be most dearely beloved vnto the, vnto whom besydes the bondes of the spirit, he is also ioyned after f flesh: Thou wouldest loue a stranger, if thou seest him become suche a one as Onesimus is. But nowe thou shalte loue him for this respecte that where he is of thine owne household, he is proued suche a one as he is. And yf thou vouchesafe to haue me to be thy companion in the ghospels affaires, thou must take him agayne as it were I my selfe. For I loue him as my most deare sonne, as my highly beloved brother, & as partaker of my bondes and of the ghospell. Other thou must cast of both or hertly loue both. What he hath bene afore tyme, it besemeth not to reherse after he is baptised. Suppose him to be a newe man newly boine agayne vnto the. But if the losse of any thing greue the, wherof thou woldest haue amedes, before thou forgeue hym take me suertye for him. Requyre it of me, whatsoeuer he hath eyther hurt thee or oweth thee. I bynde my fidelitie vnto the by this my hande wityngge. Loe thou haste this Epistle written with my verye owne hande. Yf thou thinke me a trustye suertie, leate Onesimus alone, goe to lawe with me, I shal paye the agayne in his behalfe, whatsoeuer he oweth the. Thus muche I coulde obteyne (I thinke) yf I had to do with any other man. I am not disposed to reherse at this presēt, what I might iustly require of the by myne owne autozitie. For I wyl not make reherfall here, that inasmuch as thou arte become a christian man by my doctrine, thou owest me not only that that thynne is, but also thine owne selfe, Suche lesse wrong thou oughtest to

reken it

The paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Epistle

reken it, yf I woulde requyre the to forgyue me, what soeuer losse it be that Onesimus oweth thee, howbeit I desyre not that, oules thou wilt wyllingly and of thyne owne mynde forgyue it, not so muche to set my promise at libertie, as that thou shouldest declare thy charitie. Wel goe to: my bryther Onesimus hath his name of fructifon, who, lyke as I loue hym deuely, and as I woulde with al myne hert haue him prayled vnto the, so let it be my chaunce to haue the fructifon of thee, not after the maner as among the commune people, a frend is glad of his frende, but so as an Apostle is ioyous of his disciple that expresseth the doctrine of Christ. Thou seest how hartely I loue Onesimus, and he hath wel deserued that I should loue him. Therfoze receyue hym, & make my herts mery. Herein I trouble the with to muche a doe, not that I put any distrust in thy charitie, but I do it vpon a certayne abundaunce of loue that I beare vnto my sonne. For in dede, I knowe thyne obedience so throughe well by thyne olde diligent doinges, that I doubt not but thou wilt doe moze in this behalfe than I requyre of the. And in the meane whyle receyue Onesimus gentlie euē as my pledge, and also prepare me lodgyng agaynst I come, whiche shall not be long after. For I trust that God throughe your prayers wil once restore me agayne vnto you. And than I shall presently thanke the for thy gentill receyuyng of Onesimus. Epaphras thy countreyman saluteth thee, whiche is my felow in pryson and in bondes, for Christ Iesus sake. Moreover Marcus Aristarchus, Demas, & Lucas, my felowes in office, And imagine that they all beseeche the for Onesimus as I doe.

The grace of oure Lorde Iesus Christ be alwayes
wyth your spytite: Amen.

¶ Thus endeth the Paraphrase vpon the
Epistle to Philemon.